

LAST SATURDAY' RACE.

To the Myrtles' belong the laurels. The race is an old story now. The Myrtles played with their opponents, the time despite, choppy water, old boats tropical climate forced lack of proper training was very very bad. Still it was a most enjoyable outing. It gave the ladies an opportunity of wearing dainty creations of red and white and blue and white, with a sublime disregard to their escorts betting book or their own personal friendships, and with the sole and creditable desire of what befitted their complexions, pocket books and wardrobes. Today we are having another turn out and these water fetes of our's are very acceptable interludes and grateful excuses to lock the store and close the safe these sultry September days.

A NEW SPORT.

"To shoot flying fishes requires as much skill as to shoot quails," said the sportsman. "They move just as fast and look so much like the water that they are hard to hit. They swim in coveys, just like quails, too, and one of the prettiest sights I ever saw about the California Islands was the flight of a covey of flying fishes. I was out after them in a small launch, and as we turned the corner of the island we suddenly struck a heavy west wind. It happened that at that moment a school of tunas came rushing in and chased the flyers into the air. There must have been thirty or forty of them, and as they cleared the water, head to the wind, the gale struck them and carried them high into the air, where they drifted away like a flock of insects glistening in the sunlight, gradually falling away before the wind and disappearing from view."

"How far can a flying fish fly?" asked one of the listeners.

"Well, that's difficult to say. I know that they can soar an eighth of a mile, and I'd be willing to say that they often clear over a quarter of a mile under favorable conditions. There has always been a good deal of mystery about the flight of flying fishes, and there are two decided factions among men who ought to know. One side says that the fish flies, that is, flaps its wings; and the other that it merely soars. My side? Well I say that the fish don't fly. I have watched hundreds of them, and spent weeks trying to photograph them. There is a porthole in the Hermosa, and I leaned out of that and held my kodak trying to catch one, but it was almost impossible. But I saw how they fly. You see, all sorts of fish prey on the flying fish, and when the steamer comes along they think it's a big killer, perhaps, or a tuna, and being slow swimmers they leap out of the water, and they do it in this way: they whirl the tail around and around, and it acts as a screw and sends them out of the water. The tail is lashed with great vigor and that conveys to the body a quivering, wriggling motion that makes the side fins or wings look as though they were being flapped; but it is only for a second. The moment the fish clears the water the wings are seen to be rigid, and they are held that way while the fish shoots away three feet above the surface, like a kite, supported by the rush through the air, and impelled by the momentum received by the action of the tail. They shoot along, say, for 500 feet, then the force of the rush begins to be exhausted and the tails drops—not the head, mind you; just the tip of the tail; and see"—and the speaker picked up the four pound flyer—"see

the lower lobe of the tail. It is longer than the upper. This touches the water first, and the moment it does the tail is twisted furiously, and once more the fish darts away, clearing, perhaps, 300 feet before its tail drops again. This is repeated three or four times, enabling the fish to travel a great distance without returning to the water. The only beating of the wings is caused by the wriggling of the tail."

HARNESSING A SHARK

On the shallow lagoons of the outer Florida reef the bottom in ten feet of water is often pure white, so that dark objects resting upon it stand out with startling distinctness. One of the frequenters of the reef is a shark, known as the nurse, a huge fellow, nine or ten feet in length, who seeks the seclusion of the shallows and apparently goes to sleep. At least pretends to, as he is seen lying perfectly quiet for hours, often permitting a boat to sail over him. Naturally so sluggish a fish is easily captured, one would think. However true or untrue this supposition may prove, the following incident will serve to illustrate:

One day, after watching the sharks swimming around the lagoon and refusing to leave the white shallow bottom, it occurred to a party of boys that the nurse shark would make an admirable steed, and immediate plans were formulated to capture it.

The sharks were most plentiful near a long narrow island, and here the boys made their headquarters. Their mode of transportation was extremely primitive. The boat in which they crossed from the main island, where they lived, was the wooden casing of an arch some masons had been making, a boat-shaped affair, blunt at both ends. This had been caked and provided with rowlocks, and in it the boys made frequent excursions. The plan was to sail the boat quietly over the sharks, then lower a large slip-noose down, and take one by the head.

The rope was thrown into the boat, and, all being ready, the boys started on their expedition. They soon sighted a black spot, which told of the presence of the school of sharks, and a few moments later were quietly drifting over them. Not a word was spoken, and the greatest caution was observed as one of the boys held the boat in place while another lowered the noose. Unfortunately an oar dropped overboard, and with a whirl of their tails the big fish were off in every direction. In the excitement of the moment a third boy seized the spear and hurried it at a shark that was passing beneath the boat. The weapon took effect, and the next moment the line, which was fastened to the pole, stiffened out with a jerk, whirling the boat round and round, and throwing the boys down violently into the bottom. When they picked themselves up they found the flat bottomed boat dashing along at a rapid rate. They had secured a steed, though not in the manner anticipated. Up the reef the nurse swam, now pulling the boat dangerously near the reef and sending out a big wave on either side, then turning with a rush to avoid a coral bank that grew on the edge of the channel, and racing back to the starting point.

All this was very exciting. One boy held the line by bracing back; another took an oar and attempted to steer the craft in its wild race, while the other boy was merely an enthusiastic passen-

ger. Suddenly the shark turned again, and the bow boy, rising to see what new direction it was taking, lost his balance, and was jerked overboard. Before his companions realized fully the situation, he was being towed along on the surface by the demoralized shark. The reef boys were as much at home in the water as on land, so the unforeseen accident simply added to the sport. The remaining boys rowed across the lagoon, cutting off the shark, soon picking up their companion, who had pluckily held the line during the exciting tow. The shark soon became weary of dragging the boat, and was then run ashore.

AN AFRICAN BANK.

As an item of interest which seems so far to have escaped the attention of writers on Africa, it may be related that the natives of that part of South Africa which, to a great extent, is inhabited by Bushmen and Hottentots, have a peculiar system of banks and banking. These Kaffirs, among whom this curious system of banking obtains, live near Kaffraria, in the south of the Colony country. The natives come down south from their country to trade in the several villages and towns in large numbers, stay with the Boers for a time, then return to Kaffraria. Their banking facilities are very primitive, and consist entirely of banks of deposit alone, without banks of discount or issue, and they have no checks. But still they enjoy banking privileges, such as they are. From those who trade, of their own number, they select one, who for the occasion is to be their banker. He is converted into a bank of deposit by putting all the money of those whose banker he is into a bag, and then they sally forth to the stores to buy whatever they want. When an article is purchased by any of those who are in this banking arrangement, the price of the article is taken by the banker from this deposit money-bag, counted several times, and then paid to the seller of the article, after which all the bank depositors cry out to the banker, in the presence of the two witnesses selected, "You owe me so much!" This is then repeated by the witnesses. The general accounting comes between the banker and his several depositors when all desired purchases have been made, after which all the natives depart for their northern wilds.

CURIOUS OATHS.

There is more than a touch of the grotesque, as well as of the solemn, in the models of administering oaths in certain countries. When a Chinaman swears to tell the truth he kneels down and a china saucer is given to him. This he proceeds to break in pieces, and the following oath is then administered: "You shall tell the truth and the whole truth. The saucer is cracked, and if you do not tell the truth your soul will be cracked like the saucer." Other symbolic variations of the Chinese oath are the extinguishing of a candle or cutting off a cock's head, the light of the candle representing the witness' soul and the fate of the cock symbolizing the fate of a perjurer.

In certain parts of India tigers' and lizards' skins take the place of the Bible of Christian countries, and the penalty of breaking the oath is that in one case the witness will become the prey of a tiger, and in the other that his body will be covered with scales like a lizard.

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